

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: USAID and Thailand Good Governance and Conflict Program

What programs does the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) have in Thailand? How does the Good Governance and Conflict Program fit into other US Government's projects?

USAID's support for better governance and conflict mitigation in Thailand complements the work that the U.S. Government doing in numerous other areas, and is in line with past U.S. support for good governance and civil society in Thailand. USAID actively pursues cooperative programs with the Royal Thai Government in health, environmental protection, assistance for refugees, and support for Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) initiatives such as improving regional trade.

Health programs include the recent launch of a training program for veterinarians to trace and control animal diseases, such as avian influenza, that could spread to human beings. USAID is helping Thailand research diseases such as tuberculosis and malaria, track their spread, train researchers and caregivers, and provide community care for those affected. USAID educates people about the danger of HIV/AIDS, and has built hospices and provided home-based care for HIV/AIDS patients.

USAID is fighting human trafficking through its sponsorship of the MTV EXIT (End Trafficking and Exploitation) campaign. It counters wildlife trafficking through its support of the ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network. Thailand is an active member of ASEAN, which USAID also supports.

The USAID office in Bangkok is a regional mission with programs that address numerous regional and transnational issues, in which Thailand plays a central part. USAID works with Royal Thai Government ministries on several of these programs to provide assistance to neighboring countries. These include the responsible use of natural resources, humanitarian and disaster assistance, reducing the incidence of HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, prevention and control of avian and human influenza, prevention of human and wildlife trafficking, and resolving political conflict. These programs serve all of Asia. Most of the funding and activities are for USAID's programs outside of Thailand that support poorer nations.

Why has USAID focused on civil society organizations, media and independent government agencies as democratic forces?

The U.S. has long supported such institutions in a variety of ways; the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok has a small grants program designed to encourage civil society activities in Thailand, with information available on the Embassy website. USAID programs around the world routinely engage a wide range of participants. For the Good Governance and Conflict Program, USAID consulted with Thai stakeholders, academics, Thai government officials,

and others. Many of them noted that Thailand is a prosperous nation with a well-developed government, so the program's limited resources are focused on civil society, the media and independent agencies of the government. Funding goes to groups that work with the Royal Thai Government rather than directly to the government. There is no intent to become involved in partisan, party-based political activities.

Has the US government supported governance programs in the past?

The U.S. has a long record of supporting democratic development in Thailand. Most recently, USAID provided support to the Electoral Commission before the 2007 election. It did so by engaging civil society and promoting transparency and accountability in the electoral process. It has continued to support the political process as well as promote public involvement in the drafting of new legislation. Other programs supported by the Department of State's Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Bureau have also funded similar efforts in recent years.

How long has USAID been operating in Thailand?

USAID has been operating in Thailand for nearly half a century. It opened in 1950 and contributed more than \$1.1 billion to the country's development before closing in 1996 when Washington closed numerous bilateral missions in nations that had achieved substantial economic development.

USAID reopened in Bangkok in 2003 as the Regional Development Mission for Asia (USAID/RDMA) and today this new office manages programs in 22 countries, from China to India, Mongolia to the Marshall Islands. USAID/RDMA manages about \$120 million annually for programs throughout Asia and the Pacific.

Has the US Government had discussions with the Royal Thai Government about the Good Governance and Conflict Program?

USAID's discussions with the Thai government have been friendly and productive. It works closely with Thailand on a broad range of initiatives and holds regular discussions with them on our joint cooperation. Thailand is a close friend of the United States and has been for almost two centuries, and discussions of key issues in our bilateral relations happen at many levels, not only in Bangkok and Washington but in places like Phuket and New York.

Why is strengthening Thailand's democracy and building peace in its south of strategic importance to U.S. taxpayers?

Last year, Thailand and the U.S. celebrated the 175th anniversary of U.S.-Thai relations. This partnership is America's oldest diplomatic relationship in Asia, and is of significant importance to the American people.

Thailand and the U.S. have been partners in maintaining peace and stability in Southeast Asia for many years. A strong and stable Thailand is critical for it to maintain its role as an economic and political leader in the region and for it to counter extremism. By maintaining its status as a regional leader, Thailand can continue to play vital roles in addressing a wide range of cross-border challenges.

The U.S. and Thailand are friends and have worked together for many years, most recently through the financial crisis of the 1990's, the tsunami, and this period of political challenge.

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